
Providing proven and sustainable solutions to connect kids and their families to

- science and natural resource careers, and
 - the outdoors and all it has to offer.
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ELK's mission is to cultivate a passion in science, leadership, and service in a diverse community of learners. Through year-long and multiple-year educational experiences, ELK kids (ages 6-24) and their families develop a strong knowledge of science, natural resources, and various careers that are available in the field. Research has proven that to have success in connecting kids to nature, you must start working with them when they are young (ages 6-12) and include their families in the activities.

“When people who demonstrate a commitment to protect the natural world reflect on the sources of their actions, the most frequent reasons that they give are positive experiences of nature in childhood and parents or other role models who show nature’s value.”
(Chawla, L., 1999, Journal of Environmental Education)

ELK teaches kids and their families that **careers in science are a viable option** for youth to pursue and provides them with the resources and support network needed to achieve the same. Empowering youth to succeed also means educating their families that **college is a viable option**.

ELK's Proven History of Success

- **98% high school graduation rate** for ELK students
- Secured more than **\$160,000 in college scholarships** for ELK youth
- **Thirty-seven ELK alumni are either in college or gainfully employed**, a majority employed in a natural resource field – see attached “Alumni Success”
- **Families and youth are introduced to fishing, hunting, and outdoor experiences**, thereby ensuring new generations become part of the American Legacy and stewards of the environment
- **Successfully completed government grant projects** through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (both environmental education and environmental justice), U.S. Forest Service (More Kids in the Woods), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Foundation, and Great Outdoors Colorado

ELK Needs

- **Funding and support for ELK and organizations like ELK**

that deliver results and address the immediate need for science education and career exploration among disadvantaged socioeconomic communities.

ELK Distinguished from Youth Corps

Youth Corps traditionally targets youth who have dropped out of high school and are working toward their GED and provides them with opportunities to build trails in the backcountry. In contrast, ELK focuses on making sure kids from disadvantaged socioeconomic communities graduate from high school and are college-ready, with a strong knowledge of science and natural resource career options. **ELK alumni will be part of the next generation of Department of Interior employees and will help diversify the natural resource workforce.**

While Youth Corps provide a valuable and necessary service, it is not a realistic option for the majority of urban youth to participate in Youth Corps projects that require 6-8 weeks of backcountry living (often 50 to 100 miles away from their homes and communities). The family social structure for many urban youth, including the majority of ELK kids, relies heavily on youth playing an integral role in the family **each** day, either by helping to run the household, caring for younger siblings, and/or providing financial support to the household.

As such, **more opportunities for youth employment in science and natural resource fields are needed within urban communities** so kids can see the tangible results of their work—all while under the supervision and mentorship of science and natural resources professionals.

“We need more organizations like Environmental Learning for Kids in Denver and Outward Bound Adventures in the Los Angeles area who help raise the next generation of environmental stewards by providing positive outdoor experiences, specifically for young people of color.”

(Bonta and Jordan, Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, 2007, Diversity and the Future of the U.S. Environmental Movement)